



235 Nicoll Street, New Haven, CT 06511

www.familyct.org

203-624-2600 Telephone 203-624-5342 Fax

Testimony Regarding S.B. 1135: An Act Establishing a Sustainable Path for Maintaining the Budget Reserve Fund and Reducing the Effect of Revenue Volatility on the State Budget

Cheryl Burack, Executive Director, Family Centered Services of CT, Inc.

Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

April 23, 2015

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Cheryl Burack and I am the Executive Director of Family Centered Services of CT. We work with 1600 families/year to help them become safe and nurturing places, where children can succeed. We also serve 200 middle and high school students in a program designed to prevent teen pregnancy and give students a sense of purpose and caring for their community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB1135. I would also like to speak in favor of higher revenue in the upcoming fiscal year to avoid devastating cuts to Connecticut's social safety net.

The cuts are deep. The Governor's budget cuts nearly \$600 million from programs critical to families across the state, including \$49.3 million from the HUSKY health insurance program for children, families, and pregnant women and \$11.3 million from the Office of Early Childhood. The DSS-funded Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative is totally eliminated, even though it was endorsed by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of the CT General Assembly in 2012. This Committee concluded that DSS has established a "solid methodology for TPPI funding that should continue to be applied", and that state contract requirements and outcome measures were met or

exceeded consistently. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program is in some of the State's highest risk communities, but our teen pregnancy rate is a little over 1%, compared to the statewide average of 5.5%. This raises the question of do we pay now or pay later? If the proposed cuts are made, I worry about the future of our state and its citizens.

In order to avoid the harmful effect of these cuts, we ask the committee to raise revenue. We support the revenue ideas of groups like Connecticut Voices for Children, including a more progressive income tax, the elimination of certain tax breaks, and raising the cigarette tax.

I have attached a Fact Sheet. I know this is a difficult time and appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

Cheryl Burack, M.S.
Executive Director
Family Centered Services of CT, Inc.
203-937-2711
cburack@familyct.org